Massachusetts Urban & Community Forestry Program

The Citizen Forester

JULY 2012

Establishing a Wood Bank: Neighbors Helping Neighbors

By Peter Grima MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Outreach Service Forester The necessaries of life for man in this climate may, accurately enough, be distributed under the several heads of Food, Shelter, Clothing, and Fuel; for not till we have secured these are we prepared to entertain the true problems of life with freedom and a prospect of success. -Henry David Thoreau, Walden

We are all familiar with the concept of a food bank. A large volume of small donations creates the

bulk of the supply, and a subset of enthusiastic volunteers devote time and energy to collect, prepare, and distribute the goods. It is a simple model that helps countless families keep food on their tables in times of need. What makes this work is the basic good of people helping people and the relative ease of donating items that are a small proportion of one's own personal consumption.

Fuel is a bit more complicated – you can't donate a few gallons of No. 2 fuel oil or a dozen kilowatts of electricity. But firewood has a distinct advantage over these, because it is abundant, local, and requires a minimal amount of low-tech processing. The main ingredient to make suitable firewood, besides the wood itself, is time. That's it – firewood requires

planning ahead, making an initial investment in an entire winter's fuel supply well

in advance of the season.

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Even today, many low-income families in Massachusetts still turn to firewood as their only affordable heating option. They buy as much firewood as they can afford and hope it will last them through the winter. But, invariably, there are families that will run low on firewood, especially in the coldest winters. These are families in need, and this is the perfect role for a wood bank.

The premise of a wood bank follows that of a food bank: A supply of wood based on small donations and a body of enthusiastic volunteers willing to devote time and energy to collecting and processing the wood.

While undoubtedly there are people doing this to some extent in Massachusetts, such groups have remained below the radar of general inquiry and web searches. Yet there are good examples of well-established programs from our near neighbors to the north, and their stories are outlined below to illustrate both the technical and sentimental elements of creating and sustaining a wood bank.



"Wood For Warmth" – Sean Powers Wood Bank, Hopkinton, NH www.woodforwarmth.org

After several years of success raising money for local fuel assistance through a community-based triathlon, Mary Congoran looked out her window one day and

was further inspired by the fact that there were "trees everywhere." Sure, the money raised for the fuel assistance fund could be used for cordwood, but with so much wood around, it seemed like it ought to be easier than that, without the hindrance of a financial transaction. Thus, Mary and her husband Tom, a member of the town's selectboard, started the Wood for Warmth movement, not just to provide firewood to those in

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Establishing a Wood Bank

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need, but also to bolster community engagement by getting citizens to look out for the well-being of their neighbors. It was dubbed the Sean Powers Wood Bank in honor of a fallen police officer, giving the townspeople greater focus to be involved in this honorable cause.

The first step is to collect wood, which must start as early as possible and carry on year-round. While Wood for Warmth gets donations of all quantities in almost all forms, they are especially grateful for a local logger who donates a truckload of cordwood that makes up the bulk of their annual supply. Smaller quantities are collected, provided they are cut to 16" lengths, by volunteers with trucks willing to load and transport the wood. A typical year sees 5-6 cords of wood, with as much as 11 cords received in 2010.

Processing all this wood requires time and some basic equipment, namely a chainsaw and a splitter. A significant portion of this work is undertaken by another local family-man who donates more than his share of time and labor, cutting and splitting great quantities of wood on weekends throughout the year. Additionally, the program holds a "volunteer day" on the first Saturday after Veterans Day in November. Volunteers and their families, members of the police force and selectboard, and recipients of past donations all turn out and work side-by-side in a concerted effort to get the last of the firewood split and stacked for the winter.

The processed wood is stored at the town's transfer station, which has the advantage of having regular hours and a town employee on staff who has graciously agreed to keep the wood bank area plowed in winter. Town cooperation was essential to maintain this community resource in an accessible and familiar location. Families or individuals in need of firewood obtain a voucher for an emergency ration from the town's human services department. In this small town of 5,600 people, this comes down to having "someone who knows everyone" at the town office and has a good idea of who might be in need of firewood. Friends and neighbors can request wood for people who they know are in need, as well.

As the primary organizer of Wood for Warmth, Mary Congoran emphasizes that "you have to have faith in your people." This means everyone, from the volun-

teers, to the donors, to the recipients. "There's really not a lot of red tape to this...it's just neighbors helping neighbors."



The Grapevine Community Wood Bank, Antrim, NH www.antrimnh.org/pages/antrimnh about/thegrapevine

The Presbyterian church in Antrim, NH used to keep a small store of emergency firewood for those in need, but when they could no longer continue that practice, resident John Vance decided that he needed to keep it going. John and his wife, Kristen Vance, who also happens to be the executive director of the Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center in Antrim, began spreading the word that they were looking for donations of wood and people with splitters and chainsaws. The Grapevine had the benefit of existing community ties, a positive relationship with the town, and the support of enthusiastic volunteers to buoy up this effort.

The first years were challenging but rewarding. While the wood bank strongly prefers "easy wood" (that is, cut and split already), many of the early donations were treelength material that needed to be cut up first, then trucked to the storage site for splitting and seasoning. But again, people with a few tools and the will to donate their time and energy made things work. Families converged and cooperated to get the wood cut and hauled, bringing food and kids along to turn their work into more of an event. This community spirit has evolved into the annual "wood parties" that take place each fall, with food and families making an all-day affair of processing firewood for the bank.

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Species Spotlight—Tamarack, Eastern Larch, Larix Iaricina

By Mollie Freilicher MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Community Action Forester Tamaracks are one of the few deciduous conifers native to the United States. (Baldcypress is another one that we explored in May 2012.)

Tamaracks make

their home from the Arctic Circle, south through Canada, and as far south as northern Pennsylvania. Minnesota, and Illinois. Tamarack is a cool-loving species, growing best in USDA hardiness zones 1-5. Tamarack grows from 40 to 80 feet tall and 15 to 30 feet wide, but often it does not achieve that size when cultivated. It has a graceful habit, pyramidal, with drooping branchlets. The leaves are

three-sided, light blue-green, ¾ to 1 ¼ inch long, and occur in clusters of 30 or less on branch spurs. As a deciduous conifer, the needles turn a golden-yellow in the fall before dropping, leaving the tree with a somewhat coarser texture than in the growing season. The flowers are monoecious, yellow, and not ornamental. The tree develops small cones, 1/3 to 2/3 inch long, that turn from green to brown as they mature.

Tamarack favors moist soils and has been observed to be somewhat salt-tolerant. It is less commonly planted than its close relative, European larch (*Larix decidua*), which is

more tolerant of cultivation, but tamarack can make



for a handsome planting as a single tree or in a grove. The right site for tamarack tends to be free of excessive summer heat and air pollution and have full sun and moist, well-drained, acid soils. As with other larches, the

larch casebearer, as well as larch sawfly and various fungi, can be problematic.

Tamarack has a rich history with Native Americans who used the tamarack bark for medicinal purposes, roots for sewing and weaving, wood for making arrowheads, and twigs for hunting decoys. It is a favorite of many birds, for food and nesting, and also attracts butter-flies.



Non-native larches used in urban settings include Larix

decidua, (from Europe), mentioned above, as well as Larix



Photos: Cone and leaf: Johnida Dockens flickr.com, fall color: Cindy Kilpatrick flickr.com; leaves: John Lillis, flickr.com; form: Gary Fewless, Univ. of Wisconsin

Establishing a Wood Bank

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The wood bank's supply comes from many sources, and each year is different. People donate portions of their own firewood, donate trees they have removed, the town drops off whole street trees that were cut down, and local firewood dealers donate a few cords here and there. On average, the Grapevine ends up with about 15 cords stacked and ready to go by the onset of winter.

Wood is processed and stored near the Grapevine's office, which is in a town-owned building. This is also a familiar and accessible place, well-known to families that utilize any of the Grapevine's services. The wood bank added a wood shed to the operation after a local college student wrote a grant proposal to fund the project. This keeps the wood dry and snow-free through winter and makes it easier to access.

Families in need simply call the wood bank, and the staff there determine what type of assistance is best for them. The wood bank is intended for emergency situations, including those who run out of firewood, as well as those who unexpectedly find themselves with no power or a broken furnace. They try to limit people to two level pickup truck beds each year to help spread the resource to as many families as may need it.

The success in Antrim has led to interest in neighboring towns. The Grapevine has consulted with five other towns to date. When asked about the liability of people using chainsaws and splitters and moving heavy wood pieces, Kristen says the Grapevine purchases "volunteer insurance," which is relatively inexpensive. People don't sign waivers or get briefed on "at your own risk" policies — it's just a community activity where everyone does what they are capable of to support the wood bank and the families it helps.

The Grapevine's wood bank supplies nearly 30 families every year with wood provided and prepared by members of their own community. For the volunteers involved, the wood bank and the fall "wood parties" are among the highlights of the year. Former wood bank recipients and volunteers and their families get together and basically have fun, while working on the simple and wholesome task of processing firewood.

The success of the wood bank in Antrim began with the will of one person, John Vance, who decided that his community would be better off with this resource. With the Grapevine as the community instrument to organize the effort, John and his family put their time, energy,



and equipment to use to get the program off the ground. His wife, Kristen, states it plainly: "We wouldn't have a community wood bank if it weren't for John." John Vance passed away in 2011, and the Grapevine hopes to name the wood bank in his honor.

Common Themes

In both of these examples, people make the program: People in need, people willing to give, and people whose lives are honored and memorialized by the acts of generosity and kindness. A strong community-centered group at center stage helps carry things along, while donors and volunteers are off living other parts of their lives.

Since we are generally surrounded by trees everywhere in this state, most of the potential firewood is already out there. In light of the major weather events in recent years, and given our most recent mild winter, there is probably a fair amount of "easy wood" left over in wood piles across the Commonwealth. Just add people, compassion, and a pickup truck, and you've got the beginnings of a wood bank.

If you have a wood bank story from a **Massachusetts community that you'd like to** share, please contact Peter Grima at peter.grima@state.ma.us.

Growing Greener—in Weston, Land's Sake

This spring, Land's Sake, Inc., a non-profit organization based in Weston, was awarded a Massachusetts Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant. The mission of Land's Sake is to connect people with farming and forestry through educational programs at their farm and on local Conservation lands. The organization has a working farm (with Community Supported Agriculture shares and a farmstand) and has many programs for all ages on farming. Land's Sake will use the grant to increase the capacity of their forestry programs and to improve educational programming for the public and for their volunteers in the realm of forestry. The grant will allow the organization to hire a consultant to develop a strategic plan for increased educational activities and improved forest management on mu-

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nicipal lands. Already, the organization works on town Conservation lands to harvest cordwood in close coordination with the Weston Conservation Commission.

Memorial Grove Dedication, North Park, Fall River, May 28, 2012

By Jane DiBiasio, Grant Writer, City of Fall River This year Fall River marked Memorial Day with a tree planting ceremony and dedication in honor of three young men who were killed in action during the wars in Afghanistan

and Iraq. Ten Valley Forge American elm trees were planted in a grove in the City's North Park around a marker engraved with the names of the fallen soldiers - Michael Bouthot, Robert Barrett, and Scott Andrews.

The idea and funding for the trees and the marker came from the Fall River Street Tree Planting Program, Inc. (FRSTPP), a volunteer organization dedicated to providing a sustainable tree planting program for the citizens of Fall River; to educating the public regarding the benefits and value of trees in the urban environment; and to advocating for long-term tree maintenance.

The trees - Valley Forge elms - were carefully selected for several reasons. Valley Forge, near Philadelphia, was the site of a Revolutionary War battle fought by the Continental Army under George Washington, and it is historically significant for most Americans. In addition,

Valley Forge elms are known to be particularly resistance to Dutch elm disease and resilient against harsh urban conditions, such as pollution.

Similarly, the North Park location was thoughtfully chosen. This 28-acre park, which was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (the father of American landscape architecture), was established in the

mid-1880's and placed on the National Register of Historic Places, within the Highlands Historic District, in 1983. North Park is heavily used by adults for walking, dog-walking, bird-watching, and picnicking, and by children who use the hills for sledding, the paved roads and walks for skate boarding, and the ballfields for games.

The park and this peaceful memorial grove provide welcome respite for urban residents. The FRSTPP hopes that many will visit it and that other trees will eventually be planted here. Thanks to the FRSTPP and the City of Fall River, the families of these heroes and the entire community now have a tangible living tribute in memory of all those who have served and who still serve this country.

Thank you to National Grid

In May, National Grid donated \$250,000 to the Mass ReLeaf Trust Fund, a fund that supports tree planting in the Commonwealth. This is the second time in the last five years that National Grid has made a donation in this amount to the **Fund. The funds support DCR's** matching grant program and are used in communities where National Grid has implemented its ACT Reliability Improvement Program. The ACT Reliability Improvement Program requires the removal of risk trees near utility lines.

So far, National Grid's donations have provided grants to 21 communities. Grants are given in increments of \$5,000, \$10,000, and \$15,000 and require a 25% match from communities. The grants can be used for tree planting or other activities that will enhance the capacity for urban forest management, such as conducting a street tree inventory. Some recently-funded projects include the planting of 29 trees along two streets in Beverly, the planting of 33 trees along a Route 122A in Rutland, and the transplanting of small trees in Newburyport that were planted in poor locations.

ALB Emergence is Near

Keep an eye out for Asian longhorned beetle this summer. The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources has a number of flyers on ALB and lookalikes in both English and Spanish available at: http://massnrc.org/pests/alb/albmedia.htm.

Comparison between the introduced Asian longhorned beetle (Anoplophora glabripennis) and the native Whitespotted Pine Sawyer (Monochamus scutellatus) IPHOTOS NOT TO SCALE!





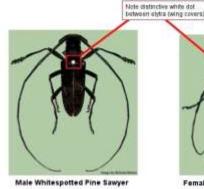




Photo source: http://www.uvm.edu/albeeltendentification/index.html

THE CITIZEN FORESTER

News

Tree Canopy Linked to Reduced Crime in Baltimore City and County

A new <u>study</u> published in <u>Landscape and Urban Planning</u> found that with few exceptions, increased tree canopy was linked to reduced crime in Baltimore City and Baltimore County, Maryland. Researchers looked at an index of robbery, burglary, theft, and shooting and found that a 10% increase in canopy was associated with approximately a 12% reduction in these crimes. The effect was more pronounced in areas with trees on public land. The study also contains a review of previous studies that explored the relationship between crime and types of vegetation.

Trees used to tackle Cape wastewater woes

By Patrick Cassidy, June 25, 2012

HYANNIS — The concept is simple: Plant nitrate-loving trees and feed them with nitrate-infused water. The trees suck up the nitrates from pretreated wastewater, helping further clean the outflow before it travels through groundwater into local bays and ponds. While the idea — known as phytoremediation — is not new in other applications, it's still considered relatively untested in dealing with wastewater. An experiment at the Barnstable Water Pollution Control plant may shed more light on whether phytoremediation could help cut into the controversial multibillion-dollar cost of treating Cape Cod's wastewater. Read the full story at the <u>Cape Cod</u> Times.

Tree City USA—Thank you to NSTAR and all who attended

On May 31, 2012, DCR Urban & Community Forestry held its annual Tree City, Tree Line, and Tree Campus USA Forum and Awards Ceremony. We recognized 84 communities that earned the Tree City Award for 2011. Paul Sellers from NSTAR was the keynote speaker and spoke about changes to NSTAR's vegetation management program. We also heard from Eric Seaborn, Program Coordinator for the DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program. Gig Lang from the New Bedford Tree City Committee spoke about New Bedford and the importance of trees in the community. Ken Gooch, DCR Director of Forest Health, addressed some of the trials and travails of state forests in 2011 and provided an update on forest pests that are here in Massachusetts and on the horizon. Peter Grima, DCR Outreach Service Forester, spoke about generating a local wood



movement in Massachusetts modeled after the local food movement. Thank you to all the speakers.

Huge thanks to NSTAR for sponsoring the event. The Urban and Community Forestry Program strongly values the partnership we have with NSTAR. Special thanks go to Paul Sellers, Senior Arborist, Margaret Norton, Director of Communications, Christine Collier, Administrative Assistant, and staff at NSTAR who helped coordinate the event. Thank you to NSTAR staff who attended the event: Paul Sellers, Chris Fallon, and Tom Morahan.



missioner Edward M. Lam-

bert, Jr.

DCR - NSTAR Go Green Grant Program

The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program, in partnership with the NSTAR Company, is offering matching grants to municipalities in the NSTAR service area. For every NSTAR customer who switches from a paper NSTAR utility bill format to an electronic bill, NSTAR will make a donation to the Mass ReLeaf Trust Fund to support the DCR Urban Forestry Challenge Grant Program. These grants are made for the purposes of community tree replacement planting and of building local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry.

Municipalities in the NSTAR Service Area that are eligible for the grant program can be found at the link below.

To Apply

If your community is eligible for this grant, you must submit an Intent to Apply Form, and our staff will follow up with you on your idea.

<u>Download the full Application</u> Download Additional Guidelines

Check to see if your town is serviced by NSTAR
Sub-Recipient Audit Requirements for Federal Funding

If you have questions about grant programs, please contact Eric Seaborn at 617-626-1468 eric.seaborn@state.ma.us or Mollie Freilicher 413-577-2966 mollie.freilicher@state.ma.us

Join the Massachusetts Grove!

The Grove is a new website where you can share photos, news, and other information about urban forestry and activities taking place in your community. The website is a partnership between the USDA-Forest Service and the Georgia Urban Forest Council and has no advertising. Sign up for free and join the Massachusetts Grove and read and post information on tree planting and urban forestry activities in your community. Check in with the Grove as often as you like, or simply receive emails when we make updates to the Massachusetts Grove: www.massachusettsgrove.org

DCR - National Grid Partnership Challenge Grants

The DCR Urban and Community Forestry Program, in partnership with the National Grid Company, is offering matching grants to specific municipalities in which National Grid has completed their ACT Reliability Improvement Program. These grants are made for the purposes of community tree replacement planting and of building local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry. Eligible Communities Currently Include (but may not be limited to):

Amesbury	Haverhill	Pembroke
Andover	Hawley	Pepperell
Beverly	Heath	Randolph
Billerica	Hopedale	Rehoboth
Bolton	Lancaster	Rowe
Brimfield	Lenox	Scituate
Charlemont	Leominster	Seekonk
Chelmsford	Mendon	Southborough
Dighton	Milford	Stockbridge
Douglas	Millbury	Tewksbury
Dudley	Newbury	Topsfield
Grafton	North Andover	Uxbridge
Granby	Northampton	Warren
Great Barrington	Norton	Wenham
Hanover	Norwell	Westford
Hanson	Orange	Wilbraham

To Apply

If your community is eligible for this grant, you must submit an Intent to Apply Form, and our staff will follow up with you on your idea.

Download the Intent To Apply Form

Download the full Application

Download additional grant guidelines

Sub-Recipient Audit Requirements for Federal Funding

Neighborhood Nature at Elm Park

Sponsored by Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary

Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the summer. See <u>schedule</u> for details.

Audience: All (suitable for children 0 - 18 years) This is a free program. Registration not required.

Drop in anytime for activities, crafts, stories, and nature walks. Take a break from the playground to learn about the plants and animals that can be found in Worcester through hands-on projects and games.

Neighborhood Nature on the Water at Green Hill Park

Sponsored by Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary Select Fridays in July and August. See <u>schedule</u> for details Audience: All (suitable for children 6 - 16 years) This is a free program. Registration not required.

Join the fun in our canoes and learn about the wildlife that depend upon this park. We provide canoes, paddles, personal flotation vests, and basic canoeing instruction. You provide the enthusiasm and interest! Swimming skills are required. An adult must accompany all participants under 18 years. Program may be cancelled due to inclement weather. Please call 508-753-6087 to check program status.

Instructions and Directions: Open to children ages 6 and up. When there is a line, we ask participants to limit the ride to 20 minutes.

For more information, contact: <u>Broad Meadow</u> Brook Wildlife Sanctuary

414 Massasoit Road

Worcester, MA 01604-3546 bmbrook@massaudubon.org

We have begun to archive recent versions of the newsletter online. For back issues, go to http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/urban/citForester.htm or read them at the Massachusetts Grove.

Emerald Ash Borer Workshop— September 18

DCR will host a workshop on emerald ash borer (EAB) targeted to forest owners, foresters, tree care professionals, land management professionals, and municipal employees. The workshop will cover topics to assist individuals and communities prepare for the arrival of the EAB and to minimize the potentially devastating economic impacts.

The workshop will be held in the Berkshires; location to be determined. More information to follow.

Planning for Growth and Open Space Conservation Webinar Series

The USDA Forest Service has a new series of webinars related to growth and conservation of open space. Natural resource professionals, land use planners, private landowners, and others will hear from experts about the issues facing our forestlands, both public and private, and learn about opportunities and strategies to conserve open space through a series of monthly webinars. All are welcome to participate!

SAF or ISA Continuing Forestry Education (CFE) credits are now available for these webinars.

More information at the USDA Forest Service: http://www.fs.fed.us/openspace/webinars.html

Arbor Day Foundation Volunteer Center

Are you a volunteer in search of a tree-related event? Or are you an event organizer in search of volunteers? The Arbor Day Foundation has set up a new website to help these two groups get together. At <u>arbordaynow.org</u> you can register your event or search for volunteer opportunities where you live.

Volunteers are a critical part of maintaining and enhancing the urban forest, and volunteering is a great way to learn about trees, make friends, and make a difference in a community.

On the Horizon

July 26	Great Ideas Summer Conference & Trade Show, UMass Extension, Elm Bank, Wellesley	Nov 1	MA Urban & Community Forestry Challenge Grant Deadline
August 11 15	http://extension.umass.edu/ Asian Longhorned Beetle Awareness Month www.beetlebusters.info ISA International Conference, Portland, OR www.isa-arbor.com Southeast Tree Wardens 49th Annual Field Day and Equipment show, Plympton, MA	Nov 8-10 Nov 11-13	TCIA Expo, Baltimore, MD <u>www.tcia.org</u> New England Chapter ISA 46 th Annual Conference, Newport, RI,
August 11-15		Nov 12-13	www.newenglandisa.org Society of Municipal Arborists International Conference & Trade Show, Sacramento, CA http://www.urban-forestry.com/ Partners in Community Forestry National Conference, Sacramento, CA http://www.arborday.org/
Sept 20		Nov 14-16	
October	NeighborWoods Month, http://neighborwoodsmonth.org/		
Oct 1	Deadline for Intent to Apply for MA Urban & Community Forestry Challenge Grants	Nov 28-Dec1	ASCA <u>Annual Conference</u> , Rancho Bernardo Inn, San Diego, CA
Oct 5	MCA Exam (first exam under version 2.0 of the Study Guide), Wellesley, MA		our 2.0go, o. (
Oct 6-7 4 th	www.massarbor.org Annual Women's Tree Climbing Workshop		
	www.newenglandisa.org		
Oct 19-20	DCR Tree Steward Training, Petersham, MA		
Oct 31 – Dec	UMass Extension Green School, Marlborough, http://extension.umass.edu/landscape/		

Bureau of Forestry

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The Citizen Forester is made possible through a grant from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Bureau of Forestry.

If you have a topic you'd like to see covered or want to submit something to The Citizen Forester (article, photo, event listing, etc.), please contact Mollie Freilicher

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